



York and Scarborough
Teaching Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Healthy Eating for Diabetes in Pregnancy

Information for patients, relatives and carers

① For more information, please contact:

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Introduction

This booklet has been designed to help you manage your diabetes in pregnancy. You may already have diabetes, or you may have developed diabetes during your pregnancy (also known as gestational diabetes).

Diabetes is a condition where the body cannot control the level of sugar (glucose) in the blood.

Insulin is a hormone that removes glucose from the blood and takes it to where it is needed in the body for energy. Without enough insulin, the blood glucose level rises.

Gestational diabetes is a form of diabetes which occurs during pregnancy. Due to the effects of pregnancy hormones, your insulin may not be working properly and so the blood glucose level rises. Gestational diabetes will often go away once the baby has been born.

Raised blood glucose levels during pregnancy can be harmful for you and your baby. It is important that you follow the advice from your dietitian and diabetes team to help you control your blood glucose levels.

What is the dietary treatment for diabetes in pregnancy?

You should follow your dietary recommendations during pregnancy and after your baby has been born. If you developed gestational diabetes, this advice may help to reduce your risk of developing diabetes in the long term.

Dietary treatment is based on a healthy eating plan. In addition to this, you should focus on carbohydrate foods to help manage your blood glucose levels.

Healthy Eating

It is important to include five different groups across the day to make sure that you have a healthy balanced diet. This also means that you will be getting the nutrients that you and your baby need.

You should try to include the following groups:

1. **Potatoes, bread, rice, pasta and other starchy carbohydrates** – choose one for each meal
2. **Fruit and vegetables or salad** – five portions daily (two to three portions of fruit and two or more portions of vegetables or salad)

3. **Beans, pulses, fish, eggs, meat and vegetarian alternatives** (e.g. Quorn or tofu) – include two to three portions daily. Aim for two portions of fish per week, one of which should be oily (salmon, sardines, trout, herring or mackerel)
4. **Dairy and alternatives** – include three portions daily (1 portion = 1/3 pint of milk or one small pot yoghurt or small match box size of cheese). If having a milk alternative (e.g. soya milk) ensure it is fortified with calcium and iodine
5. **Oils and spreads** – try to use healthy varieties (e.g. olive oil, sunflower oil, rapeseed oil or spreads based on these), but use them sparingly

What are carbohydrates?

Carbohydrates are the only food group that can be broken down to glucose (sugar) in the bowel after you have eaten them. This means that they are the only food group that will cause your blood glucose levels to rise.

Carbohydrates are an essential part of the diet and should be included at regular intervals across the day. There are two types of carbohydrate – sugar and starch.

Sugary foods and drinks

These cause your blood glucose level to rise very quickly, making your diabetes more difficult to manage. It is for this reason that we encourage you to choose low sugar alternatives.

Reducing sugary foods and drinks

Sugary food and drink	Low sugar alternatives
Sugar, sucrose, glucose	Low calorie artificial sweeteners e.g. Sucralose (Splenda), Aspartame (Canderel), Hermesetas, Saccharin, stevia
Fizzy pop and full sugar cordial, Lucozade and energy drinks	Diet, low calorie and sugar free versions. No added sugar squash
Sweets	Fresh fruit for snacks. Sugar free mints/sweets
Honey, syrup, treacle, jam, marmalade	Berries or peanut butter
Sugar-coated/sweetened breakfast cereals e.g. Sugar Puffs, Frosties, Crunchy Nut Cornflakes	Porridge, Bran based cereal (Branflakes, All Bran or own brand), no added sugar muesli, wheat based cereal (Shredded wheat or own brand)

Sugary food and drink	Low sugar alternatives
Sweet biscuits, chocolate biscuits, cakes and sweet pastries, chocolates	Plain biscuits e.g. Rich Tea, Morning Coffee, digestive, Garibaldi, ginger biscuits, fig rolls. Small amounts of plain cake, scone, fruit bread or teacake
Tinned fruit in syrup	Fresh fruit, tinned fruit in natural juice. Small amounts of dried fruit
Fruit yoghurts containing sugar/low fat yoghurts	Diet/light/healthy choice and no added sugar yogurts e.g. Shape, Ski Light, Activia no added sugar, Danone light & free
Desserts, whips and mousses containing sugar. Jelly	Sugar free whips, sugar free jelly

Diabetic products are not recommended as they are expensive and may cause some stomach cramps and diarrhoea.

Starchy foods

These foods will be broken down into glucose in the bowel. Starchy foods include: breads, cereals, potatoes, pasta, rice, noodles, crackers, grains (cous cous and bulgar wheat), pastries, pizza bases, breaded or battered foods and pulses

Slowly digested foods

Choosing more slowly digested foods helps keep your blood glucose level more steady after a meal.

Some slowly digested starchy carbohydrates include:

- Granary, seeded, multigrain, rye or sourdough bread
- Pasta (white or wholemeal)
- Basmati rice, brown rice or quick cook (parboiled) rice
- Couscous, bulgur wheat, barley or quinoa
- Sweet potatoes or new potatoes with skin
- Pulses – baked beans, lentils, chickpeas and kidney beans
- Porridge oats, bran based cereal (e.g. All Bran, Branflakes)

Naturally present sugars in the following food are also digested slowly:

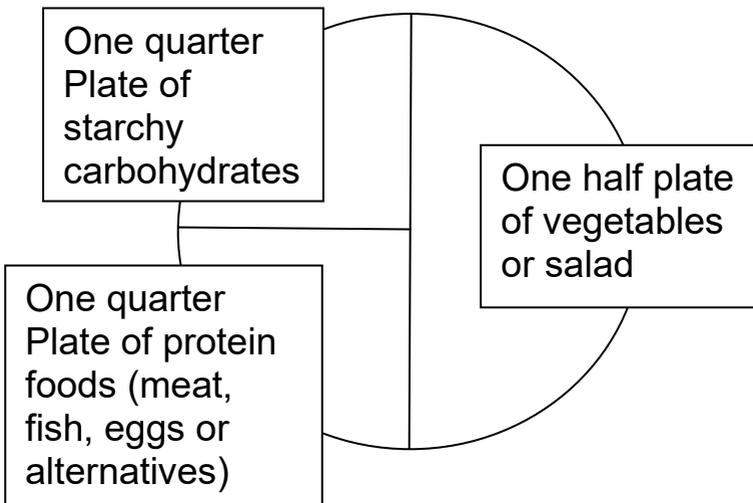
- Fruit (choose whole fruit or tinned rather than juices, smoothies or dried fruit)
- Milk and yoghurt

Portion sizes

All carbohydrate foods will eventually turn into glucose (sugar) and enter the blood stream. It is therefore important to look at **how much** carbohydrate is being consumed at any one time.

By decreasing the amount of carbohydrate in your diet, you can lower your blood glucose levels. However, it is important not to cut these foods out of your diet completely.

Instead, try to eat similar amounts of carbohydrate at each meal, which will help to keep your blood glucose at a steady level across the day. A sample menu has been provided to help you achieve this, but you can use the following plate model as a guide:



Sample menu plan

Breakfast

One medium slice of granary or seeded bread and olive based spread with eggs, low fat cheese, peanut butter, meat, fish or vegetarian alternatives

Or 20g of a suitable cereal and 180ml milk

Or One portion of fruit

Or Small pot of diet / light fruit based yoghurt or a plain yoghurt

Lunch and Evening meal

Food	Cooked (g)	Uncooked (g)
New potatoes boiled	270	270
Or Baked potato	180	180
Or Basmati rice	130	50
Or Pasta	120	50
Or Couscous	150	50
Or two medium slices of granary or seeded bread		

And 75-150g lean meat, fish, vegetarian alternative (e.g. tofu), 2 eggs or 50g low fat cheese

And vegetables or salad

And 1 portion fruit or diet/light yoghurt or unsweetened dessert

If having **two** sources of starchy carbohydrates:

Food	Cooked (g)	
Baked beans in tomato sauce, chickpeas, kidney beans or lentils	100	
Or Yorkshire puddings	50	
Or Stuffing	70	
+		
Food	Cooked (g)	Uncooked (g)
New potatoes boiled	160	160
Or Baked potato	130	130
Or Basmati rice	80	30
Or Pasta	80	30
Or Couscous	90	30
Or one to two medium slice granary or seeded bread		

And 75-150g lean meat, fish, vegetarian alternative (e.g. tofu), 2 eggs or 50g low fat cheese

And vegetables or salad

And 1 portion fruit or diet/light yoghurt or unsweetened dessert

Snacks

Two hours after each meal. See healthy snacks list.

Healthy Snacks

Some healthy snack ideas are provided below:

- One portion of fresh fruit
- One glass of low-fat milk
- One small pot of diet or light yoghurt
- Two plain biscuits
- Half a scone or teacake
- One slice of fruit loaf
- One slice of seeded or granary bread
- Two wholegrain crackers

If looking at food labels, aim for **15g carbohydrates per portion or less**.

The following snacks are very low in carbohydrates and so can be added to one of the options above:

- Small handful of unsalted nuts or nut butter
- Cheese (small matchbox size)
- Olives
- Cold cuts, chicken pieces or fish
- Boiled egg
- Vegetable sticks

Weight management

Extreme dietary restrictions to aid weight loss are not recommended during pregnancy.

It is worth remembering that pregnant women do not need to eat more than they did before pregnancy. Calorie requirements do not increase until the last three months of pregnancy (and then only by 200 calories per day).

The best way to manage weight during pregnancy is to follow a healthy diet and to lead an active lifestyle.

Fruit and vegetables

Aim to have five portions of fruit and vegetables per day. This means two to three portions of fruit daily and two to three portions of salad or vegetables daily.

Fruit and vegetables are suitable fresh, frozen or tinned. Tinned fruit should be in natural juice and not syrup.

What is a portion?

- One small banana
- One medium apple/pear/peach/orange
- Two satsumas/plums
- Seven strawberries

- Handful of grapes
- Three dried apricots
- One tablespoon sultanas
- Three tablespoons cooked vegetables
- Seven cherry tomatoes
- Bowl of lettuce

How do I reduce my fat intake?

High fat foods	Low fat alternatives
Fried foods	Grill, microwave, boil or bake your foods
Butter or margarine	Low fat spreads high in polyunsaturated or monounsaturated fats e.g. sunflower or olive oil based spreads
Full fat cheeses e.g. Cheddar	Reduced fat cheeses: Edam, Gouda, cottage cheese, light spreadable cheese
Full cream milk	Semi-skimmed, skimmed milk or 1% milk
Mayonnaise, salad cream and dressings	Low calorie or reduced fat mayonnaise or salad cream or salad dressing
Pastries, pies, pizza, breaded/battered foods	Lean cuts of meat/fish
Crisps	Fruit, low-fat crisps, diet/light yoghurt, Ryvita/oatcakes and low fat cheese

Salt

High blood pressure can cause problems throughout pregnancy. Reducing the salt in your diet can help to lower your blood pressure.

You can limit the amount of salt you eat by:

- Trying not to add salt when cooking or at the table
- Trying different flavourings for food e.g. pepper, herbs and spices
- Reducing salty snacks e.g. nuts, crisps, marmite, tinned and powdered soup
- Cutting down on the number of smoked foods e.g. smoked fish or bacon
- Take care with processed foods or pre-prepared foods as these tend to have a high salt content, these include tinned and packet soups, processed meat products such as burgers and sausages, tinned meats and pastas and ready meals.

Physical activity

Physical activity is recommended to be included five times a week. During pregnancy the majority of activities can still be undertaken.

Increasing activity can help to lower your blood glucose levels. This is particularly important when the activity is done after meals, which will help to lower your blood glucose reading one hour after the meal and before your next meal or snack.

Vitamin D

During your pregnancy (and throughout breastfeeding) you will need a vitamin D supplement to help strengthen your baby's bones and protect your own bone health.

The vitamin D supplement should contain at least 10 micrograms daily. This could be in the form of a pregnancy multivitamin or you can purchase vitamin D supplements separately. Ask your Dietitian or a Pharmacist if you need further advice.

Are there any foods I should avoid?

In pregnancy, there are certain foods to avoid or use in moderation due to the risk it may have on your unborn baby. The advice below may help you with food safety during your pregnancy.

- Raw or uncooked foods – avoid products and dishes that contain raw and partially cooked eggs e.g. homemade mayonnaise, ice-cream (including soft whipped ice-cream). Avoid raw shellfish, raw or undercooked meat and chicken. This will help you to avoid food poisoning from salmonella.
- Cheese – avoid soft cheese such as Brie, Camembert, sheep and goats' cheese and blue veined cheese or stilton due to the risk of Listeria.
- Fish – avoid shark, marlin and swordfish. Limit oily fish and fresh tuna to twice per week or canned tuna to four times a week due to the mercury or contaminants contained in these fish.
- Liver – avoid liver and liver pate due to the high levels of vitamin A. You should also avoid multivitamins containing higher levels of vitamin A.
- Caffeine – limit coffee to two mugs and tea to three mugs daily. Take care with high energy drinks and coca-cola drinks.
- Alcohol – avoid in pregnancy.

Diabetes UK

Diabetes UK is a good source of information for people with diabetes.

Contact details are shown below:

Diabetes UK
10 Parkway
Camden Town
London
NW1 7AA

Tel: 020 7424 1000

Web address: www.diabetes.org.uk

Tell us what you think of this leaflet

We hope that you found this leaflet helpful. If you would like to tell us what you think, please contact:

Admin Team, The York Hospital, Wigginton Road, York YO31 8HE, telephone 01904 725269 or email Nutrition&Dietetics@york.nhs.uk.

Teaching, training and research

Our Trust is committed to teaching, training and research to support the development of health and healthcare in our community. Healthcare students may observe consultations for this purpose. You can opt out if you do not want students to observe. We may also ask you if you would like to be involved in our research.

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS offers impartial advice and assistance to patients, their relatives, friends and carers. We can listen to feedback (positive or negative), answer questions and help resolve any concerns about Trust services.

PALS can be contacted on 01904 726262, or email pals@york.nhs.uk.

An answer phone is available out of hours.

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